

ENERGY AND SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

August 26, 2020 – 2:00pm
Zoom Meeting Protocol

Attendees – Dean Paul Winistorfer, Jon Clark Teglas for Chris Kiwus, Nick Woods for Ken Miller, Mike Dunn for Liza Morris, Blake Bensman for Frances Keene, Denny Cochrane, Scott Kerklo, Rob Glenn, Rob Lowe, Dana Hawley, Elena Lind, Matthew Eick, Erin Hopkins, Jamie Stein, Brandon Burkey, Jack Leff

Guests – John Randolph, Mary-Ann Ibeziako, Sean McGinnis, Jeri Baker, Nick Quint, Brian Kubecki, Lowell Jessee, Daniel Webb, Nathan King, Michael Bell, Jennylynn Johnson, Christina King, Kevin Byrnes

Welcoming Remarks and Introductions

Meeting Agenda Approved.

Old Business

2019-2020 Student Green RFP Program

Denny Cochrane the student Green RFP Program Manager. He presented an overview of the program, the role of the Energy and Sustainability Committee, and the status of the 2019-2020 Green RFP Program. Highlights of the program include the following:

- Virginia Tech created the student Green RFP Program in AY 2010-2011 to provide our students with a formal process to submit their sustainability ideas.
- Student proposals are submitted, reviewed, with select proposals prioritized, approved, and implementation initiated in the same academic year.
- The E&SC acts as a third party to prioritize select student proposals.
- The E&SC Chair presents the select proposals to the Office of Budget and Financial Planning (OBFP) for consideration.
- Since AY 2010-2011, 83 proposals approved with funding over \$1.2 million.
- The 2019-2020 student Green RFP Program advanced 19 select proposals with results pending due to the financial impact analysis of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The 2020-2021 student Green RFP Program will launch in September 2020.

New Business

The Virginia Tech 2020 Climate Action Commitment Working Group's Final Report

Professor Emeritus John Randolph gave a presentation on the “Virginia Tech 2020 Climate Action Commitment Working Group's Final Report, July 2020” which was formally presented

to Senior Vice President and Chief Business Officer Dr. Dwayne Pinkney on July 15, 2020. He said that overall the presentation and discussion went very well. He said that Dr. Pinkney had some concerns about adding a high level position during COVID-19, and financial impacts. Dr. Winistorfer gave his thanks and full support for the amazing body of work. Jack Leff gave remarks about the great body of work. He said there were some concessions from upper admins, but he was glad that it was really only budget related. Dr. Winistorfer remarked how great it was to have a university arborist and add more tree cover to sequester carbon. John Randolph agreed and said Jamie King was highly involved in the process.

First Reading and Discussion: “Resolution to Approve the Virginia Tech 2020 Climate Action Commitment (see copy at the end of the meeting minutes)”

Professor John Randolph conducted the First Reading of the resolution and led the discussion. Scott Kerklo expressed concerns that COVID-19 and unforeseen issues related to that and building energy use. For example, mixing in more ventilation air from outside and how that can increase energy use rather than decrease it. This topic may be more prevalent in the future with other similar events that may result in setbacks, etc. Dr. Winistorfer asked if forest sequestration and agriculture would offset our carbon emissions? John Randolph responded that it wouldn't be enough, but we could use alternative forms of energy such as geothermal, solar, etc. We don't want to be dependent on carbon offsets alone.

University Governance Review and Proposed Schedule

At the conclusion of his presentation to Dr. Dwayne Pinkney, Professor Emeritus Randolph was tasked to draft a resolution containing the 15 goals in the VT 2020 Climate Action Commitment Working Group's Final Report as written. Dr. Pinckney approved the draft resolution for university governance review process with the intent of having the resolution presented to the Virginia Tech Board of Visitors for approval at their meeting on November 16, 2020.

Kim O'Rourke, Vice President for Policy and Governance, outlined the review process and established the proposed schedule:

- **Energy and Sustainability Committee**
- First Reading – August 26, 2020
- Second Reading/Vote to Approve – September 3

- **Commission on University Support**
- First Reading - September 17
- Second Reading/Vote to Approve - October 15

- **University Council**
- Presentation of the VT 2020 CAC Working Group's Final Report – October 5
- First Reading 1 – October 19
- Second Reading/ Vote to Approve – November 2

- **Virginia Tech Board of Visitors**
- Presentation for Approval – November 16

Recommendation for the Energy and Sustainability Committee to Consider Taking Action after First Reading

Many of the members of the 2020-2021 Energy and Sustainability Committee served on the Virginia Tech 2020 Climate Action Commitment Working Group and/or participated in one or more of their 12 Subcommittees that addressed specific topical areas. In addition, many of our current members also served on the 2019-2020 Energy and Sustainability Committee which received monthly progress reports from Professor Emeritus Randolph as directed by Dr. Pinkney.

Vice President Kim O'Rourke is responsible for providing administrative support to the University Council, and, in addition, is the Secretary to the Virginia Tech Board of Visitors. She has served in both roles for 20 years. Based on her university governance expertise and knowledge of the level of involvement of our committee members with the Virginia Tech 2020 Climate Action Commitment Resolution, she recommended I asked our committee to consider taking action following the first reading of the resolution. In other words we have the first reading, introduce a motion to vote to take action after the first reading, and if the committee approves, we introduce a motion to recommend approval of the resolution. If approved this would eliminate the need for a second reading from the committee.

Dean Paul Winistorfer began the discussion by stating his tremendous respect of Vice President O'Rourke and her expertise of the university governance process. He strongly supported taking action after the first reading and moving the resolution through the university governance structure. Nick Wood expressed Vice President for Finance Ken Miller's support for the resolution. Blake Bensman announced strong support for the resolution from Ted Faulkner in the Division of Student Affairs.

Denny Cochrane introduced a motion to approve taking action on the resolution following the First Reading. Rob Lowe seconded the motion. The committee with 15 members present voted unanimously to take action following the First Reading. Denny Cochrane then introduced a motion for the committee to vote to approve the resolution. Jack Leff seconded the motion. The committee with 15 members present voted unanimously to approve the resolution. The resolution will be advanced to the Commission on University Support.

Next Meeting

Denny Cochrane stated date and time of our next meeting to be determined.

Adjourn

Denny Cochrane introduced a motion to adjourn. Rob Glenn seconded. Meeting adjourned.

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE VIRGINIA TECH 2020 CLIMATE ACTION COMMITMENT

WHEREAS, Virginia Tech recognizes that sustainability is an integral part of the fabric of the university as it pursues enhanced economic stability and affordability, diversity and inclusion, environmental stewardship, expansion of knowledge, and education of future leaders; and

WHEREAS, Virginia Tech has long been recognized as a leader in campus sustainability, with the highest scores for the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) Sustainability Tracking, Assessment, and Rating System (STARS) for institutions in the Commonwealth of Virginia and the Atlantic Coast Conference, numerous Governor's Environmental Excellence Awards, prominent standing in Princeton Review's top 50 Green Colleges, and many other accolades; and

WHEREAS, the 2009 Virginia Tech Climate Action Commitment and Sustainability Plan, as revised in 2013, was a cutting-edge effort for its time, but now fails to prescribe what climate scientists recognize as necessary actions and also falls short of many peer universities' recent initiatives; and

WHEREAS, the campus community has pushed for more aggressive climate action as represented by demands of student environmental organizations and resolutions by the Faculty Senate and Staff Senate, the Student Government Association, and the Graduate Student Assembly; and

WHEREAS, Virginia Tech President Timothy D. Sands stated in November 2019 that "climate change presents one of the world's most pressing problems...and Virginia Tech has a duty to respond," and called for a new working group to evaluate the university's progress in climate action and to update its climate action commitment; and

WHEREAS, a 26-member Virginia Tech Climate Action Commitment Working Group met weekly for six months from January through June 2020; led 12 subcommittees involving 125 faculty, staff, student, and community participants; and engaged hundreds of university community members in online surveys and virtual convening sessions, to produce a comprehensive evaluation of progress and develop a new Virginia Tech 2020 Climate Action Commitment; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Tech 2020 Climate Action Commitment contains an aggressive yet pragmatic set of 15 goals – and pathways to achieve those goals – that involve necessary upgrades to the campus physical infrastructure and operations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHG), integrate these improvements into the university's educational and research mission, engage everyone to enhance the campus culture of sustainability, and consider these actions' financial, environmental, reputational, and social equity impacts and benefits; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Tech 2020 Climate Action Commitment sets the stage for Virginia Tech to shine as an exemplar and leader in higher education climate action by not only aiming to become a carbon neutral and zero-waste campus by 2030, but also utilizing the university's unique Virginia Tech Electric Service to partner and develop a way to 100 percent renewable electricity by 2030; using considerable land resources to manage agricultural impacts, sequester carbon, and develop renewable energy; accounting for behavior-related GHG emissions from waste and transport; integrating climate action into education; and specifically addressing community engagement, sustainable behaviors, and social equity;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Virginia Tech Board of Visitors approve the Virginia Tech 2020 Climate Action Commitment, including the following vision and mission statements, and 15 goals:

Vision of the Virginia Tech 2020 Climate Action Commitment:

In the spirit of Ut Prosim, Virginia Tech will be a leader in climate action in service to our community, the Commonwealth, and the world.

Mission of the Virginia Tech 2020 Climate Action Commitment:

The mission of the Virginia Tech 2020 Climate Action Commitment is to achieve carbon neutrality by changing our physical infrastructure, collective and individual behaviors, and educational mission; to engage everyone in creating a culture of sustainability; and to achieve these objectives through just and equitable means.

The Virginia Tech 2020 Climate Action Commitment Goals

1. Carbon neutral Virginia Tech campus by 2030
2. 100 percent renewable electricity by 2030
3. Eliminate coal by 2025 and improve efficiency of campus energy systems
4. Reduce building energy consumption to enable carbon neutrality by 2030
5. Operations of new buildings initiated by 2030 will be carbon neutral
6. Agricultural, forestry, and land use operations will be carbon neutral by 2030
7. Virginia Tech to become a Zero-Waste Campus by 2030
8. Establish sustainable procurement policy and procedures by 2022
9. Reduce single-occupancy-vehicle commuting to campus by 20 percent by 2025 and reduce transportation-related GHG emissions by 40 percent by 2030
10. Integrate the Virginia Tech 2020 Climate Action Commitment into the university's educational mission through a new Climate Action Living Laboratory beginning in 2021
11. Establish climate justice as a core value of the Virginia Tech 2020 Climate Action Commitment
12. Diminish barriers to sustainable behaviors through institutional change, education and social marketing
13. Implement the Virginia Tech 2020 Climate Action Commitment at a high level of university administration and governance; by integrating goals for facilities, education, and campus culture; and with stakeholder engagement in the ongoing evaluation of goals and progress
14. Develop innovative budgeting and financing mechanisms to generate funding and staffing to achieve the Virginia Tech 2020 Climate Action Commitment goals
15. Develop pathways after 2030 to eliminate fossil fuels and carbon offsets by 2050